Government of NCT of Delhi, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has evolved the concept of laying interceptor sewers along the three major drains namely, Najafgarh, Supplementary and Shahdara in Delhi to prevent the flow of untreated sewage and its treatment before discharge to river Yamuna. The salient features of DJB's proposal include laying of interceptor sewers, augmentation of existing capacity of sewage treatment plants (STPs) and construction of additional sewage treatment plants after full utilization of existing STPs. The proposal takes care of the untreated sewage from unsewered areas and allows only discharge of treated effluent into river Yamuna. The tentative cost of the project is about Rs. 1300 crore. So far no expenditure has been incurred on the project. This concept is similar to the works implemented under Yamuna Action Plan, launched by Government of India in a phased manner.

(d) Under the Centrally sponsored Scheme of National River Conservation Plan (NRCP), pollution abatement works are implemented to improve the water quality in the identified polluted stretches of major rivers in the country. These works incude interception and diversion of raw sewage flowing into the rivers, setting up of Sewage Treatment Plants for treating the diverted sewage, creation of low cost sanitation facilities, setting up of electric/improved wood crematoria and River Front Development among others. Presently, NRCP covers pollution abatement works in 164 towns along polluted stretches of 35 rivers spread over 20 States at an approved cost of Rs. 4863.75 crore.

Effect of climate change on power supply

2673. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that climate change has now affected the power supply in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to protect the power disruptions from the climate changes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) So far, no noticeable effects on power generation or supply, attribuatable to climatic change, have been observed. Central Electricity Authority has, however, reported a few grid disturbances owing to unprecedented fog, high humidity, high levels of pollution coupled with absence of winter rains.

(c) Does not arise.

Sale and Purchase of captive elephants

2674. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRA SEKHAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 2501 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 6th September, 2007 and state:

(a) whether a final decision for relaxing the prohibition in the sale & purchase of captive elephants under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, has since been taken;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when necessary amendments to the Act are proposed to be brought before Parliament; and

(c) if reply to part (a) above be in the negative, by when that is likely to be done?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Since no final view has been taken, question of giving details thereof or time-frame does not arise.

Research contracts

2675. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry awards research contracts to consultants, NGOs, academic and research organizations, etc.;

(b) if so, the list of the research contracts with the names of the organizations who were awarded the research contracts in the last three years and its progress;

(c) whether the research contracts are illustrated on the website of his Ministry;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) the details of internal process in deciding the topics of these research contracts;

(f) whether the research contracts were awarded through a competitive bidding process;

(g) if so, the criteria adopted for the competitive bidding process; and

(h) if not, the sanctity of the award process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir. The Ministry does not award any research contract to consultants, NGOs, academic and research organizations. However, the Ministry promotes various research activities by providing grant-in-aid to various institutions/ organizations which *inter-alia* include colleages, universities, academic and research organizations, non-governmental organizations etc., for carrying out specific research projects in identified thrust areas of research, under its various programmes.

(b) to (h) Do not arise.

Forest cover area in India

2676. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the "Open Forest" is increasing and "dense forest cover" has been decreasing in the country, particularly in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, details of statistics of past ten years about open forest cover and dense forest cover in the country, State-wise; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken to increase the dense forest cover percentage in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir. As per remote sensing based biennial assessments made by Forest Survey of India presented in tables given in Annexure 1 & 2, the open forest and dense forest cover for the country have remained between 7.95% to 8.82% and 11.32% to 11.78% respectively of total geographic area, between 1997 and 2005.